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ABSTRACT

Leaders in any organization can usually see beyond their immediate surroundings and stir the consciousness, emotions, and energies of others to move in a similar direction. This paper suggests metaphor as a useful construct for understanding how people in schools respond to these elusive, yet persuasive leadership influences. Metaphoric languages are at the heart of organizational leadership and communications and provide helpful frameworks for enhancing teaching, research, and educational administration practice. Recent research has explored how metaphors underlying organizational life are generated, how they represent organizational processes, and how they guide the actions of those within particular social settings. Using metaphor as an instructional device allows students to examine school structures, beliefs, values, and social norms from multiple perspectives. One example might be comparing schools and service stations. Using metaphor as a research tool can provide distinctive lenses for viewing, describing, and interpreting social phenomena and can help create new realities, concepts, and ways of viewing the same phenomena. For example, viewing the school through rational/mechanistic, organic, or critical theory lenses is bound to produce varying results. The most important application of metaphor to administrative practice is as a tool for creative insight into organizational problem-solving. Since leadership is the exercise of influence, school leaders' choice of metaphors can be a source of power. Included are 17 references. (MLH)

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LANGUAGES OF LEADERSHIP:

METAPHOR MAKING IN EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION

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LANGUAGES OF LEADERSHIP:

METAPHOR MAKING IN EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION

Arthur S. Ward, Jr. describes a leader as a person who is going somewhere and who is able to persuade others to go with him. Implicit in this description of leadership are notions that leaders in any organization or social setting have their sights set beyond their immediate surroundings and that they have the ability to stir the consciousness, emotions and energies of others to move in a similar direction. The purpose of this paper is to suggest a useful construct, metaphor, for understanding how people in schools exercise and respond to these elusive yet persuasive influences of leadership. Metaphors and other suggestive analogies are rich and powerfully evocative languages of leadership. These languages are at the heart of organizational leadership and communications. They also provide helpful frameworks for the enhancement of teaching, research, and practice in the field of educational administration.

The lifeblood of any society, culture or organization is its system of communication. Gordon (1969) states that "everything human beings do may, one way or another, be subsumed under the general heading of 'communications'" (p. ix). Though important messages are transmitted among individuals through a great variety of mechanisms, a formal system of symbolic representation, a language, is a basic medium of human social interaction. "Our use of language represents a crucial link between the collective, cultural and cognitive individual domains in our everyday lives" (Forgas, 1985, p. 253).

At the heart of any language are the symbols and metaphors used to convey thoughts, perceptions, and feelings related to our experiences in a particular social context. As Gordon states, symbols and metaphors are those "means men use of to extend the sense-data they find in life" (p. 79). Susan K. Langer (1953) states that we create symbols from the various analogies and metaphors we choose to communicate our experience in the world. "We create symbols that are instruments by which the languages of communication become possible, and through which

we transmit an enormous range of logical and psychological data. Symbols are keystones of the words used in language, and are therefore fundamental to human thought itself" (p. 65).

Metaphors, similes, and other analogies have long been the tools of creativity and expression by poets and artists. Susan K. Langer states, "all artists (and all saints) speak to us by metaphor. Their symbol systems act as analogues of life, 'mirrors of nature', not so much reflecting reality as translating it into suitable and digestible metaphors" (p. 65). However, metaphors are not simply evocative comparisons and artfully used words. Metaphors are pervasive in our everyday lives and they represent our conceptualizations of experiences as well as the feelings, thoughts, and actions that flow from those experiences. Metaphors are those devices that permit us to understand and experience one kind of thing in terms of another (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980).

Since language is our means to communicate direct experience, meaning, and understanding, it becomes important then to analyze which metaphors and symbols underlie and help communicate individual experiences, perceptions and behavior in social organizations called schools. Though the communications repertoire of any organizational leader is comprised of a broad range of verbal and non-verbal possibilities, this paper focuses on one powerful medium of communications and leadership, metaphor. If, as Alexander (1967) suggests, "languages are man's chief window upon an understanding of the world and himself" (p. 30), then awareness of the metaphors and symbols through which meaning between individuals and their cultures is mediated is crucial to informed teaching, research, and practice in organizational leadership and communications.

Recently there has been increased interest in how the metaphors underlying organizational life are generated, how they represent organizational processes, how they shape beliefs, attitudes, and values, and how they guide the actions of those within particular social settings. Researchers have discussed the dominant metaphors that characterize various aspects of the organization, operation and administration of schools. Sergiovanni, Coombs, Burlingame, and Thurston (1980) describe three generative metaphors that influence leadership and

administrative functions in school--the rational mechanistic, the organic, and the bargaining analogy. Alan Tom (1984) defines metaphors in schooling as suggestive comparisons which have important implications to assess in terms of how we each understand schools. In his discussion of teaching as a moral craft, Tom (1984) presents a new image of teaching which welds together the craft and moral dimensions of teaching. This metaphor of teaching is much less like the craft-as-imitation approach than it is a critical perspective which stresses "The moral as well as the empirical aspects of teaching issues, the importance of reflecting on what purposes education ought to serve, and the need to remember the limitations of current knowledge (p. 144). Kliebard (1972) identifies three metaphorical roots which represent and guide curriculum theory. They are production, growth, and travel. Kliebard (1983) states "without metaphor, there would be no models or theories. Models and theories in curriculum become more familiar and less rarified when seen as part and parcel of the universal attempt to transfer meaning from the familiar and comprehensible to the remote and perplexing. Metaphors that evolve into models or theories serve not only to direct research by creating a symbolic language that provides the framework for the collection and interpretation of data, but as a way of isolating a dimension of the question to be examined that is not visible without the aid of the metaphor" (p. 17). Bredeson (1985) identified three dominant "metaphors of purpose" (maintenance, survival, and vision) that typified the work activities of five school principals.

What the work of each of these researchers suggests is that metaphor is an important construct for analyzing schools as organizations and the people in them. Metaphors are useful organizers and analytical tools for examining the fundamental values in a culture "which will be coherent with the metaphorical structure of the most fundamental concepts in the culture" (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, p. 22). In addition, metaphors permit us to expand opportunities for assessing the multiple and sometimes paradoxical images and realities of organizational life and to assess the relationship between thought and action. Metaphors enhance research opportunities by: "suggesting hypotheses, presenting alternative lenses through which researchers can study particular phenomena; offering a means of schematizing insights; providing labels for data and

observations; and, establishing a basis for more formal theoretical constructs" (Bredeson, 1985, pp. 25-26). Each of these applications of metaphor has important implications for teaching school administration, for conducting research on leadership and communications in schools, and for improving administrative practices. In any high quality preparation program for school administrators, teaching, research and administrative practice are interrelated and carefully integrated. However, for discussion purposes in this paper, the utility of metaphor in each of these three areas will be treated separately.

METAPHOR AS AN INSTRUCTIONAL DEVICE

The author has used metaphors as an instructional device for helping students think about schools from multiple perspectives. The notion of the multiple perspectives is critical because students in educational administration classes are products of schools and most of these graduate students currently work in them. Most students do not look at the structures, beliefs, values, and social norms of schools as even being open to question or interpretation. They see these aspects of schooling as "social reality". The underlying metaphors which link values and practices are often so deeply embedded in organizational designs, processes and traditions that most people no longer think of them as metaphoric.

By using metaphors, students are permitted a window of opportunity to look more closely at their own school experiences and their understanding of them. In class, I ask students the following question. If you had to describe the organization, operation and administration of schools as you know them, what would you say they are like? In one respect, this is a process which forces students to make the familiar strange in order to gain fresh insight into what has become for them an all too familiar organization. Since graduate students in educational administration are primarily seasoned professional educators with broad and varied backgrounds, they have a rich experiential basis to respond to the question. In a very short time students are able to formulate a list of analogies which constitutes an in-class descriptive basis for viewing schools as organizations. The list of suggestive comparisons is always unique and generates

animated discussions as to why one person would liken schools to a patchwork quilt while another thought schools were more like service stations. When international students have contributed to these lists, the discussions have been particularly revealing of the cultural context of schools.

As interesting as the discussions are, there is need to move beyond the initial descriptive qualities of each analogy to examine what slice of reality each particular metaphor highlights. One aspect that becomes immediately apparent is the fact that schools are, at any one time, many different things to different people. The fact the people selected different metaphors lets each student know that even though they all might think they are focusing on the same social entity, they each might have experienced and come to understand that experience quite differently. The underlying assumption here in terms of organizational analysis is that schools as social organizations at any one time represent collections of values, beliefs, and norms of behavior. As Gareth Morgan (1986)states, "If one truly wishes to understand an organization, it is much wiser to start from the premise that organizations are complex, ambiguous and paradoxical" (p. 322). The in-class analysis then progresses to more in-depth assessment. Follow-up questions are raised: What values and beliefs are associated with the metaphors listed? What aspects of schooling and administration do each highlight? This question is an important one because the metaphorical structure that one person may use to describe schools also includes entailments, that is, a family of attendant characteristics or properties that transfer now to categories for thinking about schools. One example of such entailments are the following ones associated with the comparison of schools to service stations. Figure 1 suggests how the overall structure of the metaphor of service stations can be used to organize our thinking about various dimensions of schools. The metaphor not only allows us to see one thing (schools) in terms of another (service stations), it also provides us with one highly structured and delineated entity which structures another. Obviously the fit of this structural metaphor is grounded in systematic correlations of our correspondences that come together for us and represent a kind of reverberation down through a network of suggestive analogies each of which awakens and connects our past experiences with service stations to our experiences in schools.

SCHOOLS VIEWED AS SERVICE STATIONS
NETWORK OF CORRESPONDENCES

SCHOOLS		SERVICE STATIONS
	clients	
	service oriented	
	containment	
	maintenance	
	conveniently located	
	easy access	
curriculum content		service manuals
educational outcomes		serviced customers
teaching strategies		mechanical know-how
learning styles		model differences
skill development		tuneups
educational specialists		engine specialists
teachers		attendants
students		customers
student characteristics		vehicle characteristics
student deficiencies		faulty engines
ignorance		empty tanks
etc.		etc.

FIGURE 1

The fact that particular metaphors highlight certain aspects of school life while they mask others is the double-edged quality of metaphor. It is quite possible that the very devices employed to illuminate may at the same time be blinders to other very important facets of a social phenomenon. The easiest way to deal with this dilemma is to be open to the multiple possibilities suggested through various metaphors.

As an instructional technique, metaphor has tremendous heuristic value. Metaphor as an analytical and instructional tool can be used to train future administrators to examine closely the organization they know as schools and the values and conceptual structures that undergird them. Also the exercise in imagery suggests techniques that can be transported easily from the classroom to the job. One of a leader's primary functions is to articulate clearly the school's core values, beliefs and expectations. Metaphors are often the vehicles which capture and symbolize what's important, what lies ahead, and what people are committed to in the organization. As Morgan (1986) states, "By using different metaphors to understand the complex and paradoxical character of organizational life, we are able to manage and design organizations in ways that we may not have thought possible before" (p. 13). Another instructional use of metaphor is in the area of case study analysis. Morgan describes a two step process for using multiple imagery/metaphors to examine organizational life. The first step is called "diagnostic reading" of problematic situations. That is, different metaphors permit the analyst to look through different lenses to identify and discern key aspects of the situation and then to determine the character of that particular situation. The second step is "critical evaluation." This step in the process "requires that we explore competing explanations and arrive at judgments regarding the way they fit together. Rather than any attempt to make the facts of a situation fit a given theoretical scheme (as happens in much conventional organizational analysis) the method developed, takes account of the complexity of a situation by playing one interpretation against another and when necessary, choosing between them" (p. 331). Thus, organizational analysis and problem solving whether treated as classroom case studies or as actual situations remain open to the possibility of special insight to assess and deal with the problem situation. The inherent value of this two step process

is heuristic, analytical, and suggestive, not definitive. Good diagnosticians, theorists, practitioners, and students of administration remain open to the multiple possibilities that various metaphors suggest, but they are not constrained or trapped by them.

As an instructional technique, metaphor generation and subsequent analysis are methods which assist students in the development of what Hickman and Silva (1984) call new age leadership skills--creative insight and vision. Metaphors provide the creative insight to ask the right questions and to utilize a variety of critical perspectives. Vision, a requisite leadership skill, is the ability to articulate the future, its possibilities and its promise.

Finally, there are a number of advantages in the use of metaphorical analyses as instructional devices. Students of educational administration do not have to memorize yet another renaming of school phenomena. They simply need to think in terms of different perspectives as they examine critical problems as students, researchers, or as practitioners. Since the use of metaphor is a natural cognitive process, the use of metaphors reduces the level of abstraction inherent in much of the theoretical schema available to students and practitioners. Though there is no guarantee, the reduction of often needless abstraction in theory and the ability to link the everyday events in schools to our understanding of them offer the real possibility that students and practitioners will view the role of theory as a much more vital part of their work. Metaphorical analysis also enhances a leader's ability to engage in what Morgan (1986) calls a kind of dialogue with the situation one is trying to understand. Rather than superimposing a particular theoretical notion or viewpoint, one allows the situation to reveal itself through multiple images and insights. As such, metaphor making is a creative-sensitizing-interpretive process not one model or static framework. The process permits students to unravel patterns of significance of their interrelationships as they examine organizational life.

METAPHOR AS A RESEARCH TOOL

Metaphors do more than just point out and clarify pre-existing reality. Besides providing distinctive lenses for viewing, describing, and helping us understand social phenomena,

metaphors help to create new realities, new concepts and indeed, new ways of viewing the same phenomena. These possibilities have important implications for research in educational administration. Metaphors guide research in that they are the lenses through which "reality" is viewed. This normative perspective on phenomena of interest is related to research paradigms, question generation, research techniques and ultimately, what is accepted as "truth" in social reality.

An example of how three particular metaphors might help to shape and guide inquiry is useful at this point. Suppose a local school board has decided to tie future salary increases for all professional staff to measures of student outcomes. What becomes immediately apparent is that description of the problematic situation in the scenario itself will be cast from a particular paradigmatic view. If a researcher were to look at the situation through what some call a rational mechanistic lens, the situation becomes clearly one steeped in notions of rationality and efficiency. The inquiry would likely use the tools of the empirical/analytical paradigm. Research would be framed in terms of the identification of key variables of interest in the process of educating children. The search would be for those generalizable relationships and laws which govern behavior and outcomes in organizations. Some possible questions are: What is the relationship between student achievement and teacher effectiveness? What are the critical factors which affect student outcomes? What organizational designs/structures are most cost effective and value maximizing? Are there significant differences in student outcomes in schools with principals who are strong disciplinarians versus schools in which principals are weak disciplinarians? Any listing of questions is partial. However, the point is that the search in these queries is for the discovery of law-like principles of social behavior and organizational design. The findings help the researcher understand and explain phenomena of interest in the scenario as well as suggest prescriptive strategies to predict and control key variables in leadership and organizational design to accommodate the board's policy.

A different set of assumptions and questions are likely to be raised if the issue were seen through the organic lens suggested by the metaphor of school as a garden. Notions of climate,

growth, development, nutrients, and proper care, attend this view. Although there is still an expectation for production per se and there might be a search for the one best cultivating technique to produce x-amount of student outcomes, there are important differences in the basic unit of analysis. Where the mechanistic approach looks at work flow and structural variables, the organic approach poses questions focusing on the human side of organization, the human resources, the culture, and the reasons people come into schools. Several questions which might be raised are: What motivates teachers to remain committed to children and curriculum? What particular aspects of worklife for students, teachers, and administrators contribute to excellence and high levels of student outcomes? What is the relationship between school climate, teacher morale, and student achievement? In what ways do teacher/student subcultures affect pupil performance? To be sure some of these questions can be addressed using empirical/analytical approaches, but the use of ethnographic and naturalistic approaches to examine this scenario are also seen as legitimate systematic avenues of inquiry. Whereas the mechanistic lens based on empirical/analytical assumptions directs its search for one definitive approach or organizational response to the board directive, the organic metaphor focuses on the discovery of multiple realities that are uncovered in the scenario.

A third possibility, critical theory with its roots in Marxism, is to look at the issue of professional salaries and pupil outcomes mandated by the local school board as an example of oppression created by a capitalist environment in which the economically and politically powerful impose their wills on a set of unemanicipated players (teachers, administrators, and students). Alienation and radical change of the existing social order and the institutions which perpetuate it are its underlying themes. Within this paradigm, as described by Burrell and Morgan (1980), radical humanists and radical structuralists would raise different questions: Whose interests are being served by this new policy? Are teachers, students, and administrators simply pawns in the social reproduction of current economic class structure? Who gets to determine what outcomes are equitable in a democratic society?

The examples described in the three approaches to one scenario are not meant to be exhaustive but rather suggestive of the wide range of possibilities in serious inquiry. Certainly some metaphors and their structures are more helpful than others. Over time some metaphorical structures fade away and are not even seen as such. They are simply accepted as reality and as legitimate approaches to inquiry. The purpose of this discussion is not to argue against legitimation of particular norms of inquiry but rather to suggest that inquiry into the organization, operation, and administration of schools is best served and most rigorous when such inquiry remains open to multiple possibilities and approaches for revealing the "truth". As Morgan indicates, "It is important to understand that the mode of analysis developed here rests in a way of thinking rather than in the mechanistic application of a small set of clearly defined analytical frameworks" (p. 16). While only a few examples have been discussed here, there are certainly other analogies that have the potential to generate useful insights and possibilities for research.

METAPHOR AS A GUIDE TO INFORMED PRACTICE

"What is real for an individual as a member of a culture is a product both of his social reality and of the way in which that shapes his experience of the physical world. Since much of our social reality is understood in metaphorical terms, and since our conception of the physical world is partly metaphorical, metaphor plays a very significant role in determining what is real for us" (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, p. 146). Whether teaching, conducting research or practicing the craft of administration, the ability to employ a rich variety of frameworks for dealing with particular issues or concerns distinguishes mediocre managers from excellent leaders. When confronted with serious problems, excellent leaders remain open to a wide range of possible explanations and insights. They weigh the alternative perspectives offered and then express leadership by articulating a clear sense of what is needed to resolve the problem(s) and by the actions they initiate. The link between thought and action is not a nebulous or tenuous one. "There is a close relationship between the way we think and the way we act, and that many organizational problems are embedded in our way of thinking" (Morgan, 1986, p. 334). Thus, the most important

application of metaphor to the practice of administration in schools is its utility as a tool for creative insight in organizational problem solving. As a situation is viewed from different angles, new avenues of action are entertained as administrative options. If particular metaphors do have their own injunction, then it becomes critical for leaders not only to gain insight and understanding but also to recognize the prescriptive nature of these schema. "We define our reality in terms of metaphors and then proceed to act on the basis of the metaphors. We draw inferences, set goals, make commitments, and execute plans, all on the basis of how we in part structure our experience, consciously and unconsciously, by means of metaphor" (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, p. 158).

In addition to the heuristic value of metaphor, the insights gained from various perspectives are the basis for the articulation of another critical leadership skill, vision. Vision has been defined as "an overarching goal" (Dwyer, Barnett, and Lee, 1987); "a mental journey from the known to the unknown" (Hickman and Silva, 1984); and, as moral imagination that gives an individual "the ability to see that the world need not remain as it is--that it is possible for it to be otherwise and to be better" (Blumberg and Greenfield, 1986, p. 228). Finally, Bredeson (1985) in a study of school principals defines vision as the ability to view holistically the present, "to reinterpret the mission of the school to all its constituents, and to use imagination and perceptual skills to think beyond accepted notions of what is practical and what is of immediate application in present situations to speculative ideas and to, preferably possible futures" (pp. 43-44).

The steps that leaders take to articulate and act on their visions are tightly linked to thought processes and bases of experience. Each leader's perceptions are products of diverse aggregates of knowledge, experiences, and understandings of them. As Lakoff and Johnson (1980) state, "metaphor is not merely the words we use--it is our very concept" (p. 5). Scheive and Schoenheit (1987) list five steps that leaders take to move from what they envision to what needs to be done through people to realize that vision: valuing--seeing their vision; reflection--becoming committed to that vision; articulation--making their private vision a public one; planning--developing strategies to move toward that vision; and, action--mobilizing the resources to

actualize the vision. Metaphors often serve as the building blocks for each of these steps. The means a leader selects to identify critical issues, to frame discussions, to structure questions, and to address particular issues are often expressed through metaphors. As Ordway Tead stated, "Leadership is known by the personalities it enriches. Leadership is not a matter of hypnosis, blandishment or 'salesmanship'. It is a matter of leading out from within individuals those impulses, motives, and efforts which they discover to represent themselves most truly."

Since leadership is the exercise of influence, the choice of metaphor is a source of power for leaders. The symbols a leader uses to stir the consciousness, emotions, energies and loyalties of others are applications of vision as a skill used to create "the appropriate analogue, (thence symbol) of the appropriate object at the appropriate time" (Langer, 1953, p. 65). New metaphors have the power to define and create new social realities. If leadership is anything, it is certainly the ability to create for self and others a vision of a preferably possible future. Politicians, artists, as well as educational leaders, have the capacity to generate those images which set priorities, affirm values, structure beliefs, establish norms of behavior, chart the course, enthuse others, and garner the resources to realize their vision.

Finally, the use of metaphor as a heuristic device, as an analytical tool, and as a source of insight does not require memorization of a new set of theories, typologies, or prescriptive schema for administrative behavior in schools. The use of metaphor as an administrative tool is a way of thinking about organization and its multiple realities. "The way we 'read' organizations influences how we produce them. Images and metaphors are not just interpretive constructs used in the task of analysis. They are central to the process of 'imaginization' through which people enact or 'write' the character of organizational life" (Morgan, 1986, p. 344).

Schein (1985) states that, "leaders do not have a choice about whether to communicate. They have a choice only about how much to manage what they communicate" (p. 243). Metaphors are at the heart of any leader's communication repertoire. Successful leadership in schools requires careful attention to the management of metaphor. Through metaphors, leaders mediate meaning, create understanding, and connect individuals to collective interests and

ideals. If there is any one language of leadership, it is expressed through the management of metaphor. The making and managing of metaphors will continue to have significant implications for teaching school administration, for conducting research on leadership and communications, and for improving administrative practice.

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